

Message Text

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 01 ANTANA 00697 01 OF 02 211548Z
ACTION AF-10

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NEA-10 HA-05 ACDA-12 OES-07 CEQ-01 ARA-10 EA-10
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P R 211351Z APR 78
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TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 426
USMISSION USUN NEW YORK PRIORITY
INFO AMEMBASSY NAIROBI

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 ANTANANARIVO 0697

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: EAID PDIP CN
SUBJ: COMOROS: COMORIAN FOREIGN MINISTER SEEKS HIGH LEVEL
MEETING WITH US OFFICIALS

1. SUMMARY AND ACTION REQUEST: FOREIGN MINISTER MOUZAWOIR ABDALLAH WILL BE IN NEW YORK FROM APRIL 30 TO MAY 10 AND WOULD LIKE TO MEET WITH US OFFICIALS TO DISCUSS US/COMORIAN RELATIONS AND THE PRESENT SITUATION IN THE COMOROS. HE IS WILLING TO TRAVEL TO WASHINGTON FOR THIS PURPOSE. BRIEFLY, THE MINISTER IS EXTREMELY CONCERNED THAT DESPERATION MAY CAUSE THE COMORIAN GOVERNMENT TO ACCEPT ASSISTANCE FROM THE SOVIET UNION. IN THE ABSENCE OF A CLEAR GESTURE OF MATERIAL AND POLITICAL SUPPORT BY A MAJOR WESTERN POWER, SUCH AN ASSOCIATION WITH THE USSR MIGHT LEAD TO DEPENDENCE, DOMINATION, AND SERIOUS INTERNAL CHANGES. NOW THAT FRANCE HAS ABANDONED THE COMOROS, A GESTURE FROM THE US WOULD SERVE TO EITHER PREVENT A TURN TO THE SOVIETS OR TO MAKE ACCEPTANCE OF SOVIET AID POSSIBLE WITHOUT THIS DANGER OF DOMINATION. ACTION REQUEST: THAT USUN AND/OR AF ARRANGE APPROPRIATE MEETING WITH THE MINISTER. I WOULD PERSONALLY APPRECIATE IT, AND IT WOULD BE OF HELP TO ME IN MY DEALINGS WITH
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PAGE 02 ANTANA 00697 01 OF 02 211548Z

ABDALLAH, IF ASST. SEC. MOOSE OR AMBASSADOR YOUNG COULD RECEIVE HIM. END SUMMARY AND ACTION REQUEST.

2. I SAW THE FOREIGN MINISTER TWICE IN THE COURSE OF MY RECENT VISIT TO THE COMOROS. ON THE FIRST OCCASION AT THE FOREIGN MINISTRY, HE WAS ATTENDED BY SEVERAL MEMBERS OF HIS STAFF AND CONFINED HIMSELF MOSTLY TO TALKING ABOUT MAYOTTE AND HIS

DISAPPOINTMENT AT THE US STAND ON THIS ISSUE. I AM FAIRLY CERTAIN HE WAS PLAYING MOSTLY TO HIS OWN GALLERY ON THIS OCCASION FOR ONE OF HIS ATTENDEES WAS THE COMORIAN AMBASSADOR AT LARGE TO AFRICA, WHO IS NOTORIOUSLY ANTI-WEST, A FORMER EXILE IN TANZANIA DURING THE FRENCH COLONIAL PERIOD, WHO HAS BEEN FROZEN OUT OF ANY POSITION OF AUTHORITY SINCE INDEPENDENCE.

3. MY SECOND MEETING WITH ABDALLAH WAS JUST THE TWO OF US IN HIS ROOM AT THE HILTON HOTEL IN ANTANANARIVO ON APRIL 20. WE HAD JUST COME IN ON THE SAME PLANE THAT DAY, HE ON HIS WAY TO DAKAR AND NEW YORK. ON THIS OCCASION HE UNBURDENED HIMSELF OF HIS CONCERNS ABOUT THE DESPERATE SITUATION OF THE COMOROS AND THE DANGER THIS POSED OF A TURN TO THE SOVIETS AND OF SUBSEQUENT DOMINATION OF THE SMALL COUNTRY BY THE USSR. HE DID NOT MENTION MAYOTTE ON THIS OCCASION BUT DWELT AT LENGTH ON HIS PERSONAL CONCERNS ABOUT THE FUTURE OF THE COUNTRY AND REQUESTED MEETINGS WITH USG OFFICIALS IN NEW YORK AND WASHINGTON FOR FURTHER DISCUSSIONS. THE TWO CONVERSATIONS ARE REPORTED BELOW IN ORDER.

4. MY CALL ON FOREIGN MINISTER ABDALLAH ON APRIL 16 IN MORONI OCCURRED NINE MONTHS TO THE DAY SINCE I HAD LAST BEEN THERE TO ESTABLISH RELATIONS WITH THE COMORIAN REPUBLIC (CR). HE GREETED ME CORDIALLY AND EXPRESSED PLEASURE THAT MY WIFE HAD COME WITH ME THIS TIME TO MAKE THE ACQUAINTANCE OF THE COMORIAN ISLANDS. HE WELCOMED P. HEWLETT STRONG, FFP OFFICER, USAID NAIROBI, WHO, CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 03 ANTANA 00697 01 OF 02 211548Z

I EXPLAINED, HAD JOINED ME ON THIS VISIT TO EXPLORE WAYS IN WHICH THE US COULD CONTRIBUTE THROUGH FOOD AID TO THE INTERNATIONAL EFFORT BEING MADE TO ASSIST THE YOUNG REPUBLIC WITH ITS ECONOMIC NEEDS. HE SAID AMERICAN AID WOULD BE PARTICULARLY WELCOME AS THE USG HAD SO MUCH EXPERIENCE IN THIS FIELD.

5. WE DISCUSSED HIS TRIP TO THE US LAST FALL, DURING WHICH ASST SEC. MOOSE HAD CALLED ON HIM. HE SAID THIS MEETING HAD MEANT A LOT TO HIM AND I TOLD HIM THAT MR. MOOSE HAD ASKED ME TO SEND HIM HIS REGARDS WHEN I HAD SEEN HIM IN THE US IN JANUARY. I REMINDED THE MINISTER THAT IT WAS AT HIS MEETING WITH MOOSE THAT IT HAD BEEN AGREED THAT FOOD AID WAS PROBABLY THE MOST APPROPRIATE CONTRIBUTION THE US COULD MAKE AT THIS TIME AND THAT I WANTED TO FOLLOW UP ON THIS SUBJECT.

6. MINISTER ABDALLAH THEN STARTED DISCUSSING MAYOTTE AND THIS SUBJECT TOOK UP MOST OF OUR 30-MINUTE MEETING. HE REPEATED SEVERAL TIMES HOW DISAPPOINTED THE COMORIANS ARE THAT THE US HAS NOT BEEN ABLE TO GIVE HIS GOVERNMENT MORE SUPPORT FOR ITS JUST CLAIM ON THE FRENCH-OCCUPIED ISLAND. US ABSTENTION AT THE UNGA VOTE ON THIS SUBJECT LAST FALL HAD BEEN ALL THE MORE A LETDOWN IN THAT THE COMORIAN GOVERNMENT HAD EXPECTED BETTER

OF THE CARTER ADMINISTRATION, ESPECIALLY SINCE THE LATTER HAD SHOWN THE COURAGE TO BREAK WITH PREVIOUS US POSITIONS, SUCH AS THAT ON THE SETTLEMENTS IN ISRAELI-OCCUPIED TERRITORY, AND ISRAEL IS JUST AS CLOSE AN AMERICAN ALLY AS IS FRANCE. THE MINISTER EXPRESSED THE HOPE THAT WE WOULD FIND WAYS AND MEANS TO PERSUADE FRANCE TO BE FAITHFUL TO ITS PREVIOUS FORMALLY ENUNCIATED POLICY THAT THE FOUR COMORIAN ISLANDS CONSTITUTE A SINGLE TERRITORIAL ENTITY AND SHOULD REMAIN UNITED. HE ELABORATED ON THE HISTORY OF THE COMORIAN CLAIM AND ON THE FRENCH ADMINISTRATION'S BASIC AGREEMENT WITH THE CR'S STAND WHICH HAD BEEN SUBVERTED BY THE FRENCH NATIONAL ASSEMBLY. HE HOPED THAT WITH THE FRENCH GOVERNMENT MORE SOLIDLY INSTALLED SINCE THE MARCH ELECTIONS, IT WOULD BE ABLE TO DEAL FORTHRIGHTLY WITH THE PROBLEM AND RETURN TO ITS CORRECT PRE-INDEPENDENCE POSITION. CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 04 ANTANA 00697 01 OF 02 211548Z

7. THE MINISTER THEN WENT ON AT LENGTH ABOUT THE CR'S DISAPPOINTMENT. THE CARTER ADMINISTRATION HAD BEEN MAGNIFICENT IN GETTING INVOLVED IN AFRICA, IN PUSHING LIBERATION IN SOUTHERN AFRICA, IN BREAKING WITH PREVIOUS AMERICAN POSITIONS ON AFRICA AND THE MIDDLE EAST, IN MAKING THE FIRST PRESIDENTIAL VISIT TO BLACK AFRICA, ETC. BUT ON MAYOTTE IT HAD FALLEN DOWN BADLY. HE ASKED ME TO EXCUSE HIS FRANKNESS BUT SAID HE HAD SPOKEN THAT WAY TO ME AS I AM HIS NORMAL AND MOST FREQUENT OFFICIAL USG INTERLOCUTOR. HE HOPED THAT I COULD GET THE USG TO TAKE A MORE FORTHRIGHT STAND IN SUPPORT OF THE CR'S LEGITIMATE AND AND PEACEFUL ASPIRATIONS.

CONFIDENTIAL

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PAGE 01 ANTANA 00697 02 OF 02 211627Z
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 ANTANANARIVO 0697

8. I REPLIED THAT THE USG COMPLETELY SHARED THE CR'S DESIRE
FOR A PEACEFUL NEGOTIATED SETTLEMENT OF THIS QUESTION AND WOULD

CONTINUE TO USE ITS INFLUENCE TO BRING ABOUT A SOLUTION SATIS-
FACTORY TO BOTH PARTIES. FRANCE WAS THE FIRST COUNTRY WITH WHOM
THE YOUNG AMERICAN GOVERNMENT HAD ESTABLISHED RELATIONS.
AND THE COMORIAN REPUBLIC WAS THE LAST. WE WERE OF COURSE SADDEN-
ED BY THE CONFLICT BETWEEN THE TWO, BUT, GIVEN OUR DESIRE TO
MAINTAIN GOOD RELATIONS WITH BOTH, HE COULD NOT EXPECT EXTREME
PARTIALITY FROM US, NOR ANY USG PRESSURE ON FRANCE WHICH WE HAD
HINTED WOULD BE APPROPRIATE.

9. ABDALLAH COMMENTED WITH A HINT OF SARCASM THAT THE CR DID NOT
PRESUME, OF COURSE, TO MATCH FRANCE'S IMPORTANCE IN US EYES AND
HE THEN MADE THE COMMENT CITED ABOVE ABOUT USG'S
WILLINGNESS TO BUCK ISRAEL, ALSO AN IMPORTANT US ALLY.

10. ABDALLAH THEN TOLD ME HE WAS GOING TO THE UN TO FOLLOW UP
ON THE CR'S REQUEST FOR AN INTERNATIONAL AID EFFORT AND HOPED
TO MEET WITH US OFFICIALS ON THAT OCCASION. I SAID I WOULD
NOTIFY OUR DELEGATION OF HIS COMING AND EXPRESSED THE HOPE THAT,
CONFIDENTIAL

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PAGE 02 ANTANA 00697 02 OF 02 211627Z

IN ADDITION TO MY REPORT OF OUR CONVERSATION, HE WOULD BE ABLE
TO MAKE HIS CASE PERSONALLY FOR USG SUPPORT ON MAYOTTE.

11. (COMMENT: UN: THE UN IS APPARENTLY DRAWING UP A PROPOSED
DOLS 25 MILLION EMERGENCY ASSISTANCE PLAN FOR THE COMOROS
TO INCLUDE DOLS 10 MILLION IN BUDGETARY SUPPORT.)

12. COMMENT: MAYOTTE: ABDALLAH MAY BE DISAPPOINTED IN HIS
EXPECTATION OF A NEW POST-ELECTION FRENCH ATTITUDE ON MAYOTTE.
ACCORDING TO THE FRENCH EMBASSY IN ANTANANARIVO, THE FRENCH
GOVERNMENT BELIEVES THAT THE PROBLEM OF MAYOTTE NOW HAS ACQUIRED
GREATER "HUMAN" DIMENSIONS AND IS NO LONGER JUST POLITICAL AND
PARLIAMENTARY. THE PRESENT COMORIAN REGIME'S HARDLINING HAS
DRIVEN A NUMBER OF REFUGEES TO MAYOTTE AND THE INHABITANTS OF
THE LATTER ARE ALL THE MORE DETERMINED TO RESIST ANNEXATION
BY THE YOUNG REPUBLIC.

13. MY CALL ON THE MINISTER IN MADAGASCAR, DESCRIBED IN PARA 3
ABOVE WAS QUITE DIFFERENT. IN ADDITION TO THE REMARKS REPORTED IN
PARAS 1 AND 3 ABOVE HE XPRESSED GRATIFICATION AT OUR ABILITY TO
MEET IN THIS FASHION AND SUGGESTED THAT WE CONTINUE TO

DO SO FOR IT WAS ONLY IN THIS FASHION THAT WE COULD TALK FRANKLY. HE SAID HE TRIED TO AVOID COMING TO MADAGASCAR IN VIEW OF THE STATE OF BILATERAL RELATIONS, BUT OFTEN WENT THROUGH NAIROBI AND WOULD APPRECIATE MEETING ME THERE WHEN IT WAS CONVENIENT FOR BOTH OF US.

14. DURING THIS MEETING HE REVEALED HIS PROFOUND PERSONAL CONCERN AT THE WAY THINGS ARE GOING IN THE COMOROS. HE DID NOT CRITICIZE ANYONE BUT EXPRESSED THE FEAR THAT THE COMOROS MIGHT BY DESPERATION BE DRIVEN INTO A RADICAL ANTI-WESTERN STANCE, "LIKE ALL COUNTRIES IN THIS AREA EXCEPT FOR KENYA." HE SAID HE HAD BEEN FOR MONTHS AND WAS STILL TRYING TO FIGURE OUT A WAY TO MAKE THE CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 03 ANTANA 00697 02 OF 02 211627Z

US MINDFUL OF THE SITUATION OF THE COMOROS AND CONCERNED WITH ITS FATE. THE SOVIETS ARE STILL PRESSING TO OPEN A RESIDENT EMBASSY IN MORONI AND THE DANGER OF THEIR IMPOSING THEMSELVES IS STILL REAL. HE HOPED HE WOULD HAVE A CHANCE TO DESCRIBE THE SITUATION DIRECTLY TO USG OFFICIALS IN NY AND/OR WASHINGTON.

15. I TOOK ADVANTAGE OF THIS MEETING TO DISCUSS SEVERAL SUBJECTS WITH HIM WHICH I HAD NOT RAISED AT OUR EARLIER MEETING IN VIEW OF HIS NUMEROUS ENTOURAGE. I TOLD HIM THAT THE US NAVY WAS ALWAYS LOOKING FOR NEW PORTS OF CALL AND WOULD BE GLAD TO CONSIDER CALLING AT MORONI IF THAT WERE AGREEABLE TO THE COMORIAN GOVT. I ALSO TOLD HIM THAT WE RECOGNIZED THIS COULD BE A SENSITIVE SUBJECT FOR SOME GOVERNMENTS, THAT WE DID NOT WANT TO IMPOSE OURSELVES ON ANYONE, AND WOULD NOT THEREFORE DO ANYTHING FURTHER ON THIS SUBJECT WITHOUT A GO-AHEAD FROM HIS GOVERNMENT. HE SHOWED SOME INTEREST IN THIS AND SAID HE WOULD DISCUSS IT WITH THE CHIEF OF STATE UPON HIS RETURN FROM NEW YORK, AS IT MIGHT BE A GOOD WAY TO HELP ESTABLISH A COOPERATIVE RELATIONSHIP WITH US.

16. I ALSO TOLD THE MINISTER THAT, IN VIEW OF PRESIDENT CARTER'S INTEREST IN CONTROLLING NUCLEAR PROLIFERATION, WE WERE INTERESTED IN HAVING AS MANY COUNTRIES AS POSSIBLE ADHERE TO THE NON-PROLIFERATION TREATY AND I SUGGESTED THAT THE COMORIAN GOVT CONSIDER TAKING SUCH A STEP. HE REPLIED THAT HE WOULD LOOK INTO THIS AND EXPRESSED PARTICULAR INTEREST IN THE THIRD WORLD COUNTRIES WHICH HAD ADHERED. I ALSO TOUCHED LIGHTLY ON SOME OF THE SUBJECTS OF PRINCIPAL INTEREST TO US AT THE UNGA AND OTHER FORA EXPLAINING OUR POSITIONS ON PUERTO RICO, NORTH KOREA, AND A HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR HUMAN RIGHTS.

17. I WILL BE SUBMITTING FURTHER COMMENTS ON MY TRIP TO MORONI AS WELL AS SUGGESTIONS FOR USE IN ANY MEETINGS AF AND USUN MAY ARRANGE FOR ABDALLAH.BARRETT

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